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Vermont Health Education Guidelines for Curriculum and Assessment

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Foreword

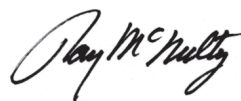
One of the Vermont Department of Education's goals is to help schools provide safe, civil, orderly, and positive learning environments and to conduct and support activities that help students make healthy choices. Schools have an enormous potential for helping students develop the knowledge and skills they need to be healthy during their school years and beyond.

A number of authorities agree on the integral relationship between health and academic achievement. The American Cancer Society, together with more than forty national health, education, and social service organizations, asserts that "education and health are interdependent systems" and that "healthy children are in a better position to acquire knowledge." Research indicates a strong relationship between student involvement in specific health-risk behaviors and negative results on measures of school performance and education outcomes, including graduation rates, class grades and performance on standardized tests.

Since comprehensive health education occurs within the context of education and learning, it contributes to the broader mission of schools. A standards-based comprehensive K–12 health education program can motivate students to maintain and improve their health, prevent disease, and avoid or reduce health-related risk behaviors. It also provides students with the knowledge and skills they need to be healthy for a lifetime.

The Department of Education recognizes the importance of providing students with solid instruction and learning opportunities in the area of health education. First published in 1996 and revised in 2000, *Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities* identifies the essential knowledge and skills that should be taught and learned in school; among other standards, the document includes standards that illustrate the importance of maintaining health, making healthy choices, and developing health skills. In addition, Vermont's *School Quality Standards* require schools to develop and implement local curriculum and assessments that articulate the integration of skills and knowledge represented in the *Framework*.

Curriculum frameworks in separate subject areas, including Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Education and Health Education, provide schools with pertinent information for local curriculum development. The *Vermont Health Education Guidelines for Curriculum and Assessment* builds on those frameworks and includes updated skills and knowledge essential to health literacy. Additionally, it provides guidance for implementation of assessment strategies that will drive and improve education and can be used to monitor program effectiveness. This resource is intended to help improve health education in Vermont schools by providing guidelines for schools to develop standards-based curriculum, assessments, and classroom instruction in alignment with Vermont's standards. I trust that educators in many fields as well as non-educators will find this document to be an invaluable tool in developing health education curriculum for their schools.



Ray McNulty
Commissioner

